

2011 Executive Summary

December 2011



Idaho's Personal Assistant Survey Results

Personal Assistants are Key to Community Living in Idaho

"Personal Assistants Empower Older Idahoans and Individuals with Disabilities the Choice to Participate in All Areas of Community Living with Our Family and Friends. Without their assistance many individuals with disabilities and older Idahoans would not have the opportunity to live in our own homes or work in competitive employment." Dana Gover

- ***The Personal Assistant Workforce is the Key to achieve Idaho's goals to expand long-term services and supports in community-based living.***
- ***A successful expansion of in-home services through Idaho's Home Choice program is directly linked to the availability of a stable and high quality Personal Assistant Workforce.***

In June of 2011, Access Concepts & Training, Inc. conducted a statewide personal assistant survey for the State Personal Assistant Work Group (SPAWG) and the three, not-for-profit, Centers for Independent Living (CIL). The survey was

funded by the State Independent Living Council's (SILC) Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) funds.

The survey focused only on the Personal Assistant Workforce employed through the Center's for Independent Living (CIL) Fiscal Intermediary (FI) programs at Disability Action Center Northwest (DAC_{NW}), Living Independence Network Corporation (LINC), and Living Independently For Everyone (LIFE). (See page 8 for contact information.)

The major focus of this survey was to gather ideas and responses from personal assistants on ways to improve the retention rate in the FI In-home Personal Assistant (PAS) Workforce. (See page 7 and 8 for definitions, questions and sources used in this Executive Summary.)

Fifty-five percent of the personal assistant workforce responded to the questionnaire. Specifically, 354 out of 638 personal assistants completed the personal assistant survey.

Working Together

**Let's Build a Strong and Reliable
Personal Assistant Workforce
By Providing Increased Wages, Health Benefits
& Training Opportunities**

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Let's Take a Closer Look

FI Personal Assistant Workforce

The Personal Assistants working through the CIL's FI programs are hired and supervised directly by the individual requiring personal assistance services, known as the employer. Employers self-direct their personal assistants in all areas of employment, including recruitment, interviewing, hiring, scheduling, training and firing. If employers need assistance in self-directing skills or managing their personal assistants, staff at DAC, LINC or LIFE are available.

Personal Assistants are the lifeline to community living. They provide daily assistance with personal care such as bathing, dressing, toileting, medication management, eating, cooking, housekeeping, shopping, and a number of other daily activities. They assist individuals to stay involved in community activities including educational and employment opportunities.

Personal Assistants are also known as direct care workers, personal care aides, personal attendants, attendants and in-home care workers.

PERSONAL ASSISTANT WORKFORCE DAC, LINC & LIFE

- 60% of the PAS workforce have a high school diploma or higher.
- 28% participated in additional training in one or more of the following: CNA, CPR, First Aid and Medication Assistance.
- 18% of the workforce does not have a high school diploma or GED
- 17% have a GED
- 17% have a disability
- 50% are recruited directly by people with disabilities and the elderly.
- 82% choose to work as personal assistants because they want to help people.

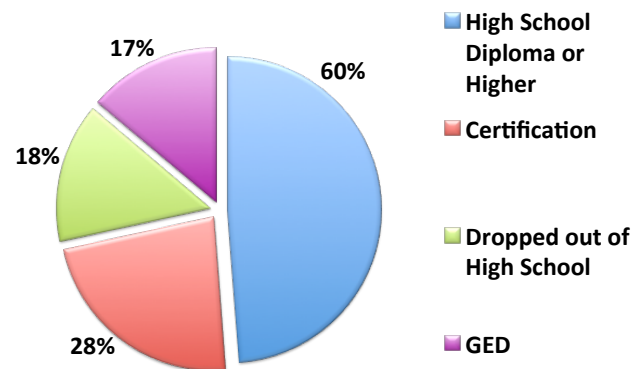
Personal Assistants are Key to Economic Growth

According to a fact sheet produced by PHI*, "*Nationally, direct-care jobs constitute a \$56 billion economic engine fueled by the personal income that over 3 million direct-care workers spend largely on locally produced goods and services in their communities.*"

Direct-care workers support employed family caregivers and their employers. A stable, well-prepared direct-care workforce is critical for supporting an estimated 15.9 million additional workers who balance full-time employment with caregiving for a family member over age 18.

The lost productivity of family caregivers who are also employed full time is estimated to cost employers \$33.6 billion annually, with a third of the costs attributable to workers either leaving their jobs or switching from full-to part-time work to accommodate their family caregiving responsibilities." (PHI Fact Sheet 2) <http://www.directcareclearinghouse.org/download/PHI%20FactSheetNo2.pdf>

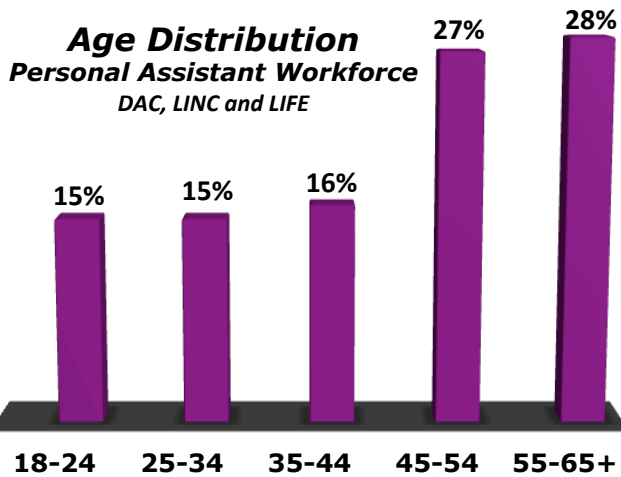
Education



*PHI (www.PHInational.org) works to improve the lives of people who need home and residential care—and the lives of the workers who provide that care. Using their workplace and policy expertise, PHI helps consumers, workers, employers, and policymakers improve eldercare/disability services by creating quality direct-care jobs.

55% of the FI Personal Assistant Workforce Surveyed are Over the Age of 45

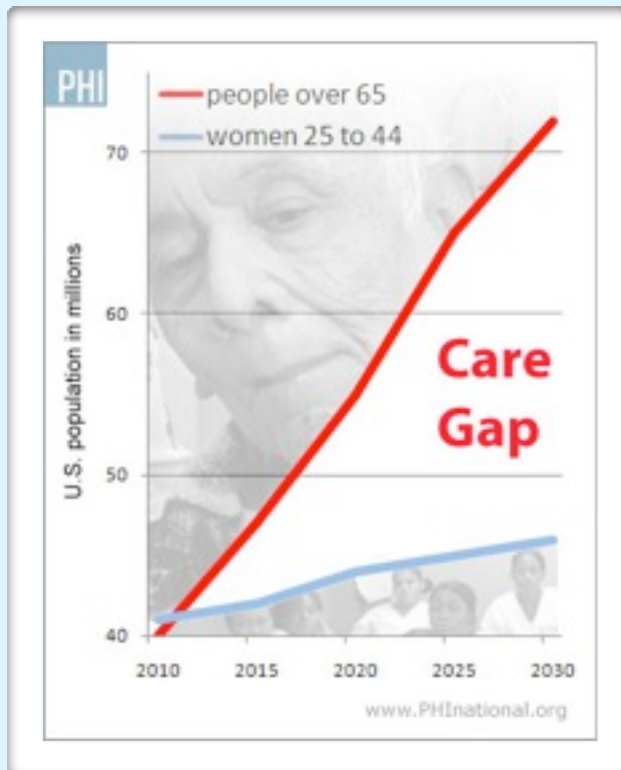
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Another interesting comparison from the survey is the age of the FI Personal Assistant Workforce working through DAC, LINC or LIFE. The study found that **55 percent of the respondents are over the age of 45; in comparison to 31 percent who are between the ages of 25 to 44.**

PHI pointed out in their Fact Sheet 2008 that, "As the population ages in this country, we face a crisis in finding qualified and committed individuals to provide care to elders and people with disabilities."

US Facing Shortage of Direct Care Workers



According to PHI between 2000 and 2030, the number of US elders will increase by 104% while women aged 25 to 44 will increase by only 7%.

By 2018, home and community based workers are likely to outnumber facility workers by one to two. (PHI Fact Sheet 3, February 2011)

By 2030, the number of elders will increase by 104 percent. During this same time period, the number of women age 25 to 44 will grow by only 7 percent.

Given this looming care gap and the challenges already faced by family caregivers, it is important to take a closer look at how, over the next several decades, we will attract people to direct-care work.

There is a simple answer: Improve the quality of personal assistant jobs by making direct-care work a respected career. A quality job is one that offers:

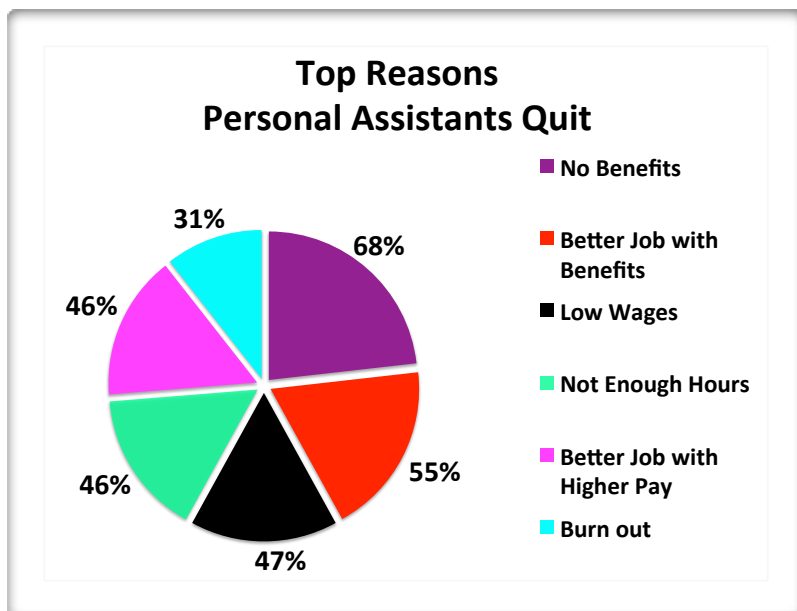
- **a livable wage,**
- **health insurance,**
- **a supportive work environment,**
- **and opportunities for advancement."**

Views from the FI Personal Assistant Workforce

The survey illustrated that over 46% of the FI PAS Workforce believe personal assistants quit working in the field of In-home Personal Assistance because of the following factors:

- **Lack of benefits (68%)**
- **Located a better job with benefits (55%)**
- **Low wages (47%)**
- **Lack of hours (46%)**
- **Located a better job with higher pay(46%)**

The majority of the FI Personal Assistants surveyed do not receive benefits such as sick leave, vacation pay or medical insurance. Current reimbursement rates make it virtually impossible for PAS Providers to offer longevity bonuses and raises.



In Idaho wage rates are based on the type of service the personal assistant provides to the individual. Personal assistant wages are in the range of \$7.00 an hour to \$10.10 an hour.

As of November 15, 2011 only two individuals in the FI Personal Assistant Workforce are paid \$10.10 an hour. However, to earn the top wage a personal assistant would have to work for a minimum of 12 years.

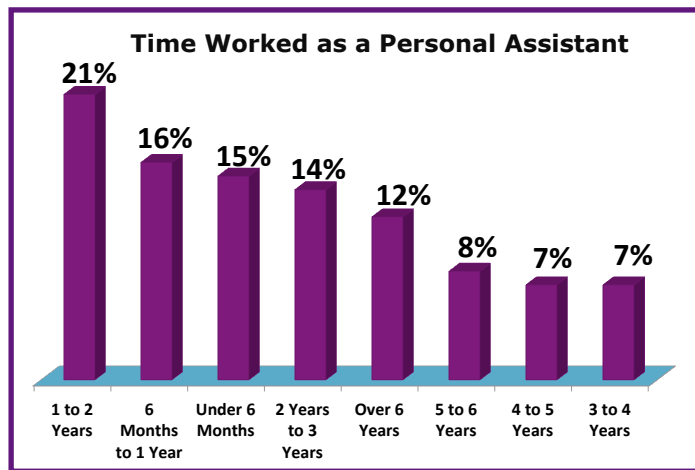
PERSONAL ASSISTANTS SPEAK OUT

- ◆ "Many individuals require additional personal assistance hours than what is approved by Medicaid. As a result, clients ask us to work extra hours and we are not paid for our time."
- ◆ "I feel wages are too low and we need medical benefits. I earn \$800.00 a month and my rent is \$750.00 per month. How can a person survive on this type of income?"
- ◆ "I think personal assistants leave their jobs because we are required to use our own car to pick up groceries, medication and other errands. This can be very costly as we are not reimbursed for mileage."
- ◆ "Every employer does things differently in their home. Personal assistants have to be patient and willing to learn how their employer wants things done. If they are unwilling to do this they won't last long in this type of job."
- ◆ "The low wages have to do with the high turnover rate. This is hard and stressful work."
- ◆ "Some individuals bring their personal assistant with them when they change provider agencies. The personal assistant's wage is lowered because they are new to the personal assistance provider agency."

Retaining a Quality PAS Workforce

Retaining quality personal assistants who are willing to work in this profession is challenging. The longevity and turnover rate in the personal assistant workforce is a serious issue and has devastating consequences on the stability and quality of services provided in a person's home and on public resources.

The survey illustrated that 66% of the current CIL FI workforce has worked in this profession from under 6 months to 3 years; while only 12% have worked for over 6 years.



Medicaid policy has a direct impact on the personal assistant workforce. Over the last few years Medicaid has decreased the reimbursement rates to personal assistance provider agencies.

The low reimbursement rates make it impossible for personal assistance provider agencies to provide a livable wage and benefits to their personal assistant workforce. **The current reimbursement rates barely cover the following:**

- Personal assistant and registered nurse wages
- Administrative costs
- Staff to implement and monitor the PAS program
- Payroll taxes
- Liability insurance
- Workers comp
- Travel and training

At a Medicaid Forum on Managed Care for Dual Eligibles Jason McKinley, President of the Idaho Association of Home Care Agencies stated, "When Medicaid cut our reimbursement rates and unbundled Attendant Care and Housekeeping services many of us had no choice, we cut the wages of our personal assistants. Our administrative costs are cut to the bare bone. We can't make any further cuts or many of us will close our doors."

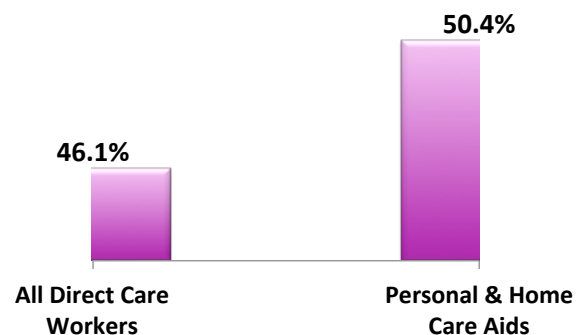
Jason also pointed out, "It is becoming increasingly difficult to attract, hire and retain individuals to perform personal assistance services as the in-home care industry is competing for employees with the retail industry, fast food and beverage industry."

Retention Rates Impact Public Resources

Poor quality direct-care jobs strain public resources. The vast majority of direct-care jobs are publicly funded, paid for by Medicaid and Medicare. However, high rates of annual turnover—more than 70 percent in nursing homes, and between 40 and 60 percent in home care agencies—lead to staggering turnover costs conservatively totaling \$5 billion annually.

In addition, nationally 50 percent of personal assistant workers live in households that rely on one or more public benefits, such as Medicaid or food stamps, reflecting the heavy public subsidies required to compensate for the low wages and inadequate benefits received by most of these workers. (PHI Fact Sheet 2, 2011)

Percentage of Direct Care Worker Households Relying on Public Benefits, 2009 PHI Publication

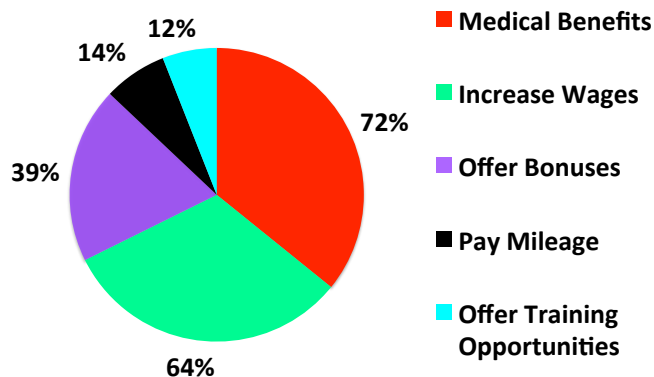


Personal Assistants Ideas on Retention

The survey illustrated that 72% of the PAS workforce believe retention rates can be improved if medical benefits are provided. In addition, 62% think increasing wages will improve retention. The following are the personal assistant's **top ideas to improve retention**:

- **Provide medical benefits (72%)**
- **Increase wages (64%)**
- **Offer bonuses (39%)**
- **Provide mileage roundtrip to a person's home (14%)**
- **Offer training opportunities (12%)**

Top 5 Ideas To Improve Retention



Quotes From Personal Assistants

- ◆ "Value a personal assistant's job as important and recognize the hard work that we do."
- ◆ "Pay a livable wage and offer raises."
- ◆ "Offer specialized training to meet our employer's individual needs."
- ◆ "Pay holiday pay, sick leave, vacation and health insurance."
- ◆ "Provide mileage reimbursement to run errands for clients."
- ◆ "Pay mileage reimbursement if we drive over 10 miles to our employer's home."

A Future Study is Critical

- An in-depth statewide survey on Idaho's Personal Assistant In-home Workforce has not been conducted.
- A study that includes both the FI Self-Directed PAS Workforce and the Traditional Agency In-home Workforce could provide invaluable information on the characteristics of the Idaho PAS workforce.
- This analysis is critical to measure the strength and quality of our PAS workforce, as Personal Assistants are a vital lifeline to community living for older Idahoans and individuals with disabilities.

Survey Limitations

- This survey lacked information on economic factors and other important characteristics of the FI PAS Workforce. (See page 7 for survey questions)
- A future study should include questions on race, marital status, gender, economic stability and health conditions.
- Questions must address wage rate, full-time or part-time employment, family responsibilities, reliance on public assistance (food stamps, CHIPS, housing assistance), chronic health conditions and the ability to buy and access affordable medical insurance.

What is Idaho Home Choice Program? This is a program administered through Medicaid funded by a CMS grant called Money Follows the Person (MFP). MFP is a rebalancing demonstration program that helps states rebalance their long-term care systems to transition people out of institutions to the community. In other words, the goal is to increase the use of home and community based services and reduce the use of institutionally based services.

What is the Idaho State Council on Independent Living (SILC)? The mission of the SILC is to promote the Independent Living philosophy for all Idahoans with disabilities choice, self-determination, and access for all. SILC promotes independent living for individuals with disabilities and works with the Centers for Independent Living, Vocational Rehabilitation and the legislature to improve services and advocate for and with individuals with disabilities. The SILC develops, implements, and monitors the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) as required by Section 704 of the Rehabilitation Act.

What is a Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG)? MIG grants are available to states to develop infrastructure to support working individuals with disabilities. For eligibility under this grant states must offer Personal Assistance Services statewide within and outside the home to the extent necessary to enable an individual to be engaged in full-time competitive employment.

What is Personal Assistance Services (PAS)? Personal Assistance Services provide in-home assistance to Medicaid eligible Idahoans who have a disability or elderly in place of long-term skilled nursing facility placement. These Home & Community Based Services (HCBS) under Idaho's Aged and Disabled (A&D) Waiver include "personal and medically oriented tasks...designed to promote the greatest degree of self-reliance in the home and community and are considered an integral component of Idaho's long term care service delivery system." Idaho Code Title 39, Chapter 56

What are Center's For Independent Living (CILs)? CILs empower people with disabilities and older Idahoans to live independently in the community. CILs are not-for-profit organizations, nonresidential and founded on a core philosophy of Independent Living. They are operated and directed by individuals with disabilities and empower people to take control of their life by promoting freedom, independence and choice.

What is a Fiscal Intermediary (FI) Self-Directed Personal Assistance Services (PAS) Program offered by CIL's? The FI PAS programs operated by CIL's are based on the philosophy of Independent Living as a person has 1) control of their life, 2) a choice to live in one's own home, 3) the ability to self-direct their personal assistance services, and 4) the responsibility to recruit, interview, hire, train, schedule and fire their personal assistant. Center staff are available to assist individuals to learn self-direction skills.

Who are Direct-Care Workers? Direct-care workers provide an estimated 70 to 80 percent of the hands-on long term care and personal assistance services. Direct-care workers fall into three main categories: Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA's), Home Health Aides and Personal Assistants. (PHI Fact Sheet 3, 2011)

Condensed Version Of The PAS Survey

1. What age category do you fall under?
2. What is your education level?
3. Do you have a disability?
4. Who is your employer?
5. How long have you worked through DAC, LINC or LIFE's Personal Assistance Services (PAS) FI program?
6. How long have you worked for your current employer (the person you work for in their home)?
7. Why did you decide to work as a personal assistant?
8. How did you decide to work through DAC, LINC or LIFE's PAS programs?
9. Why do think personal assistants leave the PAS program?
10. Do you have any ideas on what might encourage Personal Assistants to stay working in the in-home PAS field.?

NOTE: The questions listed above are a condensed version of the actual survey. There were 12 questions in the PAS survey that included multiple choice and text boxes for comments. To view the survey in its entirety contact Dana Gover at danagoforit@gmail.com

Sources

- PHI Fact Sheet 2 <http://www.directcareclearinghouse.org/download/PHI%20FactSheetNo2.pdf>
- PHI Fact Sheet 3 2011 http://www.directcareclearinghouse.org/download/PHI%20FactSheet3_singles.pdf
- PHI Data Sources and Definitions <http://phinational.org/policy/states/data-sources-definitions/>
- PHI Revised Fact Sheets with New Federal Data <http://phinational.org/archives/new-federal-data-reflected-in-phs-revised-fact-sheets/>
- PHI State Chart Book on Wages for Personal Care Aides 2011 <http://www.directcareclearinghouse.org/download/>

State Personal Assistance Services Work Group (SPAWG)

The State Personal Assistance Services Work Group (SPAWG) was organized in 2009 by the three Centers for Independent Living (CIL) as part of the Idaho State Independent Living Council's (SILC) Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG).

The State Personal Assistance Work Group (SPAWG) are members from the three Regional PAS Work Groups. Local citizens from every Idaho region are Idahoans with disabilities who employ personal assistants, and Idahoans who are employed as personal assistants.

The State Personal Assistance Work Group (SPAWG) members and the Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) recognize that access to quality personal assistance services is crucial for Idahoans with disabilities seeking and maintaining competitive employment in our communities.

The Mission of the SPAWG is:

To identify and promote state policy changes and constructive ideas to improve Personal Assistance Services.

The Goals of the SPAWG are:

To carry recommendations from the three regional PAS work groups,

To identify and promote policy changes and constructive ideas to improve working conditions for PAS employees,

To encourage professionalism, recruitment and retention,

To address issues affecting PAS working and hiring conditions by formulating constructive recommendations, and

To organize and present recommendations to Public Policy Makers, Medicaid and other policy groups such as the State Personal Assistance Oversight Committee, a statutory body per Idaho Code 39-5609.



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